

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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OMB-01 EB-07 AID-05 HEW-02 CU-02 EUR-12 AGR-05 SAJ-01

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1559

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 2003

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, NP, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER RIJAL

1. SUMMARY: IN PRIME MINISTER RIJAL'S VIEW U.S.-NEPALESE RELATIONS ARE IN GOOD SHAPE, AND HE WOULD WELCOME HIGHER VISIBILITY IN USAID PROJECTS. HE BELIEVES INDIA WILL ENDORSE THE NEPALESE "ZONE OF PEACE" PROPOSAL AND SAYS THAT NEPALESE MAY TAKE THIS SUBJECT TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ALTHOUGH THIS IS NOT YET DECIDED. END SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER RIJAL ON APRIL 30 TO TOUCH BASE WITH HIM BEFORE MY RETURN ON CONSULTATIONS AND HOME LEAVE.

3. IN RESPONSE TO MY REQUEST FOR HIS APPRIASAL, THE PRIMIN SAID THAT THE STATE OF U.S.-NEPALESE RELATIONS WAS GOOD AND THAT THE LEVEL OF U.S. PRESENCE AND PROGRAMS IN NEPAL WAS ALSO GOOD, THUS REFLECTING THE ESTIMATE GIVEN TO DEPUTY ASSITANT SECRETARY DUBS BY AMBASSADOR KHANAL (STATE 097098). RIJAL VOLUNTEERED THE THOUGHT THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD SEEK AID PROJECTS IN NEPAL OF GREATERVISIBILITY TO THE AVERAGE NEPALESE, SAYING THAT WHAT WE WERE DOING IN THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION FIELDS WAS FINE AND OF LONG RANGE IMPORTANCE BUT
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SCARCELY CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE AVERAGE NEPALESE AS

DISTINCT FROM THE ELITE. THE SOVIET UNION, HE SAID, HAD UNDERTAKEN SUCH HIGH VISIBILITY PROJECTS WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SUGAR MILL AND A MATCH FACTORY. THE PRIMIN SAID HE WOULD MAKE NO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR PROJECTS, BUT URGED US TO THINK ABOUT THIS SO THAT THE NEPALESE PEOPLE WOULD FOCUS ON WHAT WE WERE DOING. I SAID WE WOULD INDEED REFLECT ON WHAT HE HAD SAID.

4. RIJAL SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT HIS CONCERN OVER THE ADVANCES OF COMMUNISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND INDIA. NEPAL DID NOT FEAR COMMUNISM AS SUCH AND THERE WAS NO SIGNIFICANT COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN NEPAL AT THE PRESENT TIME. HOWEVER, THE PRIMIN SAID IN FAMILIAR TERMS THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE NEPALESE PEOPLE TO BE INCREASINGLY SATISFIED WITH THEIR LOT AND FOR PROGRESS TO BE MADE IN DEVELOPMENT. IN THIS RESPECT, HE SAID, THE UNITED STATES COULD HELP A LOT. IF THE ECONOMIC STRENGTH OF THE COUNTRY COULD BE INCREASED, NEPAL WOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION IN ITS DEALINGS WITH INDIA.

5. I SAID THAT OUR AID PROGRAMS IN NEPAL, WHICH HAD BEEN CARRIED ON FOR A PERIOD OF NEARLY 25 YEARS, WERE DESIGNED TO CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT AND THEREFORE GENERALLY TO STABILITY IN THE REGION. I NOTED TO HIM THAT AMERICAN RESOURCE INPUTS WERE NOT ONLY OUR BILATERAL AID PROGRAMS, WHICH HAD ALREADY AMOUNTED TO MORE THAN \$150 MILLION, BUT ALSO SIZABLE PERCENTAGES OF THE FUNDS UNDER WHICH THE WORLD BANK, THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, THE UNDP AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES OPERATED THEIR EXTENSIVE PROGRAMS IN NEPAL. THE PRIMIN READILY ACKNOWLEDGED THIS.

6. RIJAL COMMENTED ON THE "ZONE OF PEACE" PROPOSAL ADVANCED BY KING BIRENDRA IN HIS SPEECH DURING THE PERIOD OF THE CORONATION. RIJAL SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA AND PAKISTAN HAD ALREADY ENDORSED THE PROPOSAL AND THAT INDIA "WOULD HAVE TO" BECAUSE OF INDIA'S ADHERENCE TO THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT. RIJAL SAID THAT NEPAL MIGHT TAKE THIS QUESTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS FOR SOME UN ACTION, BUT THIS WAS NOT YET DECIDED. HE SAID HE WOULD HOPE FOR OUR SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE ZONE OF PEACE IDEA.

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7. I SAID THAT THE U.S. HAD NOT, AS HE KNEW, MADE AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THE ZONE OF PEACE IDEA, SINCE WE CONSIDERED THAT NEPAL WOULD CERTAINLY WISH IN THE FIRST INSTANCE TO SORT OUT THIS QUESTION WITH ITS TWO BIG NEIGHBORS. I TOLD HIM THAT OUR ATTITUDE, HOWEVER, WAS ONE OF FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNDERLYING CONCEPT OF NEPALESE FOREIGN POLICY WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE PROPOSAL. WE HAD NOTED THAT THE KING IN EARLIER SPEECHES

HAD EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR NEPAL TO HAVE A PATTERN OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS WHICH WOULD PERMIT NEPAL TO DEVELOP IN PEACE. THIS WAS IN OUR VIEW AN ENTIRELY VALID CONCEPTION WHICH WE OF COURSE FULLY ENDORSED. AS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KING BIRENDRA'S SPECIFIC PROPOSAL THAT NEPAL BE "DECLARED" A ZONE OF PEACE, WE FELT THAT THIS WAS A MATTER FOR THE NEPALESE AUTHORITIES TO DETERMINE IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHERS. I ADDED THAT I WOULD OF COURSE BE GLAD TO TALK INFORMALLY ABOUT THIS SUBJECT WITH NEPALESE OFFICIALS SHOULD THEY SO WISH AT SOME POINT.

8. COMMENT: I THINK WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE SPECIFICS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL. THE CRUX OF THE NEPALESE PROBLEM IN THIS REGARD IS INDIA. IF INDIA WOULD ENDORSE THE PROPOSAL, A MATTER ABOUT WHICH I HAVE MORE DOUBTS THAN THE PRIMIN, IT WOULD SEEM SUPERFLUOUS IN MANY WAYS TO TAKE THE QUESTION TO THE UN. IF INDIA SHOULD BE OPPOSED, A DISCUSSION IN THE UN, WHICH WOULD BE DIFFICULT IN ANY EVENT, WOULD BE A REAL CAN OF WORMS WHICH THE NEPALESE IN MY VIEW WOULD DO WELL TO AVOID. THUS FOR THE TIME BEING I THINK WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO DO WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING, NAMELY, TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE ON THE "ZONE OF PEACE," TO EXPRESS WHEN WE DO SPEAK UP OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WELLSPRINGS OF THIS IDEA, BUT TO AVOID COMMENT ON THE SPECIFICS OF HOW THE KING'S PROPOSAL CAN OR SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED. IF THE INDIANS DO ENDORSE THE ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL, AS RIJAL RPEDICTS, WE MAY WANT TO CONSIDER A STATEMENT OF OUR OWN. CARGO

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